

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 MANILA 001910

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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: PHILIPPINE POLICE SETS UP NEW HUMAN RIGHTS OFFICE

REF: A. MANILA 1702

B. MANILA 599

MANILA 00001910 001.2 OF 002

12. (SBU) According to General Doria, an immediate priority of the HRAO will be to ensure the successful implementation -- with full respect for human rights -- of the Philippines' landmark counterterrorism legislation, the Human Security Act of 2007 (ref b). Legislators had built into the bill a series of human rights protections -- with steep penalties against officials who violate basic civil or human rights -- and the HRAO will undertake training of the entire police corps to ensure that PNP personnel do not engage in any abuses that would lead to penalties coming out of the PNP budget. PNP is now part of a 46-agency team that, under the leadership of the National Intelligence Coordinating Agency, is drafting the implementing regulations for the legislation, which formally will come into effect on July 14 (e.g. two months after the mid-term elections). General Doria admitted the enormity of this task, and said he would rely heavily on "train the trainers" techniques, given that his entire staff will include no more than six officers (ideally, all lawyers) and eight other PNP personnel. The HRAO has already organized one seminar, for the PNP's Special Action Force.

13. (SBU) Over the longer term, the HRAO's mission will be both to provide policy advice on improving human rights respect within the PNP and to serve as an action office to ensure disciplinary action against those PNP personnel who violate the human rights of suspects and detainees. He promised to obtain and share with Embassy statistics on how many PNP personnel had in recent years faced disciplinary action in such cases, especially "unnecessary use of force." He said that there had not been any actual dismissals on such

charges, nor of physical abuse of detainees or use of torture, at least in recent memory. He added that the HRAO also would also eventually provide training on legitimate techniques, including proper use of fire-arms.

¶4. (SBU) For cases in which PNP personnel may have been involved in unlawful killings of leftist activists or journalists, the HRAO plans to coordinate closely with the PNP's Task Force Usig to ensure full and fair investigations and to bring to justice any culprits from within the PNP. Noting the number of police superintendents already relieved of command over the past year for alleged complicity in such cases or for failure to provide adequate oversight (ref a), General Doria insisted that, even without dismissal, such disciplinary actions have a deep psychic toll on police commanders and also would forever remain a stain on their personnel records, thus making this an effective punishment and providing a strong incentive for local commanders to take every possible measure to avoid.

¶5. (SBU) General Doria promised that HRAO would also begin soon to organize regular seminars on human rights for new PNP officers at the National Police College and for enlisted personnel at the Philippine National Training Institute. He noted that he had already received offers of assistance from the prestigious Ateneo de Manila Law Center, and will reach out next to other possible partners in the legal and human rights communities, including the Philippine Commission on Human Rights and the Armed Forces of the Philippines' new Human Rights Office.

¶6. (SBU) Pol/C and Senior Law Enforcement Advisor underscored the USG's commitment to assisting the Philippine government and PNP better to protect and promote human rights generally, and, more specifically, to ensure that those involved in unlawful killings -- regardless of who they are -- face justice. Our Senior Law Enforcement Advisor described ongoing INL-funded activities under the PNP's Transformation Program, all of which include human rights training. He and General Doria agreed to meet again soon to review curriculum and determine future areas of coordination and assistance.

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MANILA 00001910 002 OF 002

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